



The Bramley – a potted history

Picture: the original Bramley tree www.bramleyapples.co.uk

2009 marks 200 years since the pip that grew into the first Bramley apple tree was planted.

1809

The first Bramley tree grew from pips planted by a young girl, Mary Ann Brailsford, in her garden in Southwell, Nottinghamshire, England.

1846

A local butcher, Matthew Bramley, bought the cottage and garden.

1856

It was while Matthew Bramley lived in the cottage that a local nurseryman, Henry Merryweather, asked if he could take cuttings from the tree and start to sell the apple. Bramley agreed, but insisted the apple should bear his name – hence 'Bramley's Seedling'.

1862

The first recorded sale of the variety is in Henry Merryweather's book of accounts on 31 October 1862. He sold "three Bramley apples for 2/- to Mr Geo Cooper of Upton Hall".

1876

Fruits of the grafted apple were first exhibited before the Royal Horticultural Society's Fruit Committee on 6 December 1876. They were highly commended.

1887

Bramley Seedlings received a First Class Certificate by the Committee of the Royal Jubilee Exhibition of Apples held in Manchester in October.

1889 and 1893

Bramley Seedling was awarded a First Class Certificate by the Committee of the Nottingham Botanical Society and at the Gardening and Forestry Exhibition in September 1893. The Royal Horticultural Society's Apple Show awarded further First Class Certificates to the Bramley in August 1893.

1900

Disaster struck when the original Bramley tree blew down during violent storms at the turn of the century. However, the tree somehow survived and is still bearing fruit more than 100 years later.

1914

During the early 1900s the Bramley trees were extensively planted, with the fruit a useful source of food during the First World War.

1944

The 1944 fruit census comprised more than one third of six and a quarter million Bramley's Seedling trees in commercial plantations in England and Wales.

1989

Bramley growers themselves are working closely together to expand their market opportunities and, through the Bramley Campaign, which was set up in 1989, are running successful consumer campaigns funded by voluntary subscription.

2003

The Bramley tree was one of fifty great British trees chosen by the Tree Council's country-wide network of tree wardens, as a special way to mark the Golden Jubilee and to celebrate fifty great years – one for every year of the Queen's reign.

Today

The old nickname for the Bramley was "The King of Covent Garden" and still exists today in the New Covent Garden Market, where all specialist fruit wholesales can offer Bramleys to their customers for 12 months of the year.

The original Bramley apple tree continues to bear fruit to this day. Those few pips planted by a little girl in her garden in Nottinghamshire 200 years ago are responsible for what is today a £50 million industry, with commercial growers across Kent, East Anglia and the West Midlands.

Lathcoats Farm in Beehive Lane Galleywood is one of the few remaining commercial growers of the Bramley apple in Essex.

Bramleys are grown only in Britain. 71% of Bramleys grown are processed for fillings, juice etc. 29% are sold fresh.